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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANJUL 000526

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/23/2016
TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [SG](#) [PU](#) [PREL](#) [GA](#)
SUBJECT: REFUGEES FROM SENEGAL'S CASAMANCE REGION STREAMING
INTO THE GAMBIA

REF: A. DAKAR 2012

[1](#)B. DAKAR 1932 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Classified By: TDY Poloff Shaye Brown for reasons 1.4 (b)
) and (d).

NUMBER OF REFUGEES GROWING DAILY

[1](#)1. (C) As reported in ref A, the fighting that erupted between Senegal's military and MFDC rebels in Senegal's Casamance region has resulted in a large influx of refugees into The Gambia. According to our sources, the estimated number of refugees ranges from 2500 to 4500, with the latter being more probable. As of Sunday, August 20, The Gambia's country director of Concern Universal estimated the number of refugees at approximately 2500. The Secretary General of the Gambian Red Cross Society (GRCS) estimated the number of refugees at approximately 3500 as of Sunday. As of Monday night, The United Nation's High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated the number at closer to 4500 refugees with still more arriving daily. The refugees are mainly in the towns of Gifanga, Kusambai, Siwol, and Tambakunda.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES FEELING THE IMPACT

[1](#)2. (C) In the past refugees from the Casamance have stayed with friends or family members, but this time the number of refugees in some of the villages is larger than the local population and is straining the resources of host communities. One group of refugees has been housed in a primary school in Tambakunda and in Gifanga refugees are being housed in a skills training center. The schools housing the overflow refugees are scheduled to resume instructions in three weeks, on September 11. The refugees have flatly refused UNHCR's offer to relocate further inland. They say they are worried about the loss of their properties, livestock, and farms. Many of the refugees reported to UNHCR that their only reason for fleeing was because the Senegalese military placed heavy armor in the middle of their compounds.

BULLETS CROSSING THE BORDER

[1](#)3. (C) There have been incidences of bullets straying into Gambian villages. To date, no human casualties have been reported as a result of these stray rounds but some livestock have been lost. There have also been reports of villagers delivering spent ammunition cartridges to the District Chief in Kusambai. The Gambian Armed Forces deployed at least two heavily armed platoons that are actively patrolling the border area. COMMENT. With President Jammeh on vacation in

his home border village of Kanalai the deployment may be meant as a deterrent to cross-border excursions or may simply be to provide a sense of security to Gambian residents along the border. END COMMENT Reportedly, some Gambian compounds located very close to the border have been or are currently being "evacuated," to avoid stray fire.

UN AND RED CROSS RESPONDING

¶4. (C) We understand that the UNHCR is sending an emergency response team from Geneva to assess the situation and provide further assistance. A team from the various agencies at the Gambian UNDP office will join the emergency response team. The UNHCR in The Gambia reported that there is currently a critical shortage of food in the affected villages and they plan to tap emergency reserve funds to help alleviate the impact on the refugees and the local populations. The Secretary General of the GRCS reported that the International

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Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is fielding a 5-man mission from their offices in Dakar and Ziguinchor that is expected to arrive in country by August 22, 2006. Efforts by the GRCS are hampered because they currently have no vehicles of their own and were not prepared to handle this sudden influx of such a large number of refugees. For now, it appears that UNHCR and ICRC has the situation under control. Despite the food shortage, which is aggravated by the fact that we are currently in the middle of the rainy season and the new crop has just been planted, they have made no official appeal for emergency assistance and promised to inform us should the situation escalate further.

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